

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for chilling and aging front portions of poultry carcasses comprising the steps

of:

- (a) separating eviscerated poultry carcasses into front portions and back portions;
- (b) then conducting a fecal inspection of at least some of said front portions;
- (c) pre-chilling said front portions in water; and
- (d) then chilling and aging said front portions.

2. The process of claim 1 wherein said front portions are pre-chilled in step (c) by continuously conveying said front portions through an auger chiller.

3. The process of claim 1 wherein said front portions are chilled and aged in step (d) in water.

4. The process of claim 3 wherein said front portions are chilled and aged in step (d) by continuously conveying said front portions through at least one tub chiller.

5. The process of claim 1 further comprising the step, after step (a) and prior to step (b), of washing said front portions.

6. The process of claim 5 wherein said front portions are washed in said step of washing using chlorinated water.

1 7. The process of claim 5 further comprising the step, after step (c) and prior to step (d),  
2 when said fecal inspection of step (b) detects a failure, of delivering said front portions through  
3 a reconditioning wash and then to step (d).  
4

5 8. The process of claim 7 further comprising the step, after step (c) and prior to step (d), of  
6 conducting a secondary fecal inspection at said reconditioning wash.  
7

8 9. In a primary halving apparatus for poultry carcasses including a rotatable cog wheel having  
9 a plurality of radially projecting teeth and a stationary blade projecting from a radial gap in said  
10 cog wheel, the improvement comprising:  
11

12 a plurality of indexing fingers projecting radially from said cog wheel such that, as said  
13 poultry carcasses are continuously delivered to said cog wheel, said indexing  
14 fingers orient and index said poultry carcasses for cutting and  
15 a stationary guide member for guiding said poultry carcasses into engagement with said  
16 cog wheel such that said poultry carcasses will slide along and be supported against  
17 said stationary guide member during cutting.

18 10. The primary halving apparatus of claim 9 wherein the improvement further comprises a  
19 center shaft for said cog wheel which has been lengthened to accommodate delivery of said  
20 poultry carcasses through said primary halving apparatus on an evisceration shackle conveyor.  
21

1 11. In a secondary halving apparatus for poultry carcasses including a chain drive wheel  
2 positioned on a center shaft and a pair of indexing wheels positioned on said center shaft below  
3 said chain drive wheel, the improvement comprising:

4 extending said center shaft to accommodate delivery of said poultry carcasses to said  
5 secondary halving apparatus by an evisceration shackle conveyor and  
6 a third indexing wheel positioned on said center shaft between said chain drive wheel and  
7 said pair of indexing wheels, said third indexing wheel having a plurality of  
8 indexing fingers projecting radially therefrom.

9  
10 12. A conveyor for conveying and washing food items comprising:

11 a pair of adjacent conveyor belts, each having an upper carrying run;  
12 a vertical divider positioned between said carrying runs of said conveyor belts; and  
13 a wash housing through which at least said carrying runs of said conveyor belts are  
14 received,  
15 wherein said conveyor belts are independently driven so that either of said conveyor belts  
16 can be selectively driven in a direction opposite that of the other.

17  
18 13. A conveyor for inspecting and washing food items comprising:

19 a first conveyor having an upper carrying run;  
20 a wash housing through which at least said carrying run of said first conveyor is received;  
21 and

1 a second conveyor positioned below said first conveyor and having a width greater than  
2 that of said first conveyor.

3  
4 14. The conveyor of claim 13 further comprising at least one inspection stand positioned  
5 adjacent said second conveyor.

6  
7 15. The conveyor of claim 13 further comprising side walls on said second conveyor having  
8 slots therein for holding a blocking member across said second conveyor.